

Memorandum



To: Shinaah Thao and Hli Xyooj,
Hmong American Partnership

From: Brad Krueger
ACET, Inc.

Date: February 27, 2019 (revised May 2, 2019)

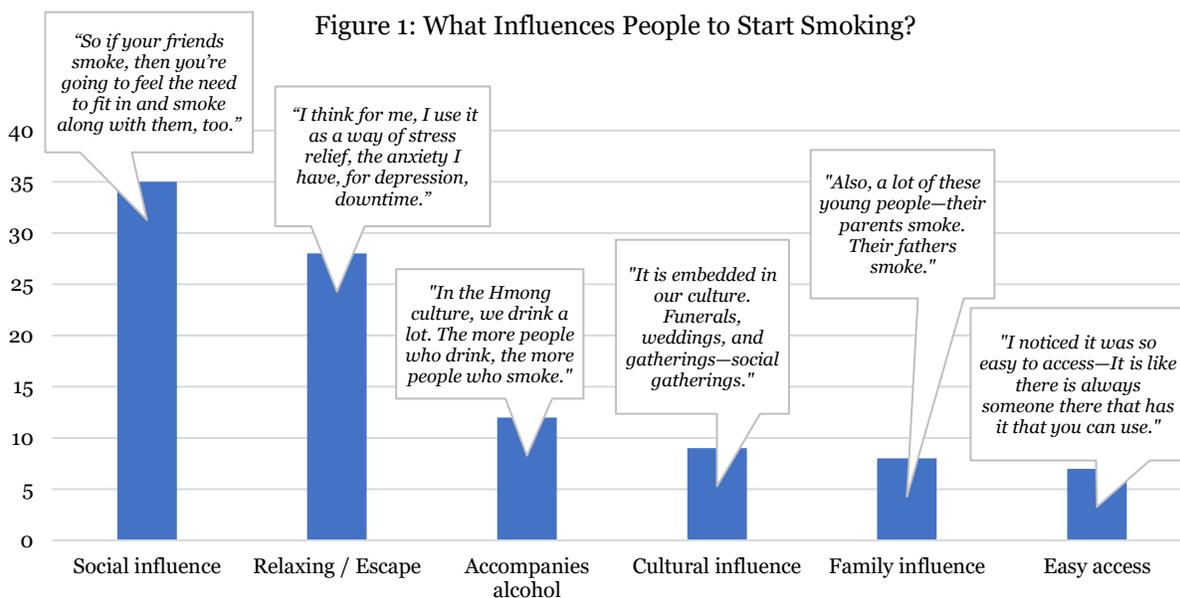
Re: HAP TFC Focus Group and Interview Results

In the Fall of 2018 and Winter of 2019, the Hmong American Partnership (HAP) Tobacco Free Communities (TFC) project completed a number of focus groups and interviews with community members. The goal of the effort was to understand more about tobacco perspectives and use in the Hmong community in St. Paul as well as how the community would like to be supported in prevention and cessation. The data was planned to be used to help complete the Tobacco Free Communities Needs Assessment process as well as facilitate learning for HAP to tailor programs. Three unique scripts were developed in partnership with ACET and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), with each specific for youth, smokers, or non-smokers. The conversations were recorded and transcribed to allow a full analysis. ACET reviewed the transcripts and generated common themes. Quotes from the transcripts were then tied to a theme, resulting in frequencies for each theme. The results below are the frequencies of themes as identified by the overarching question. In addition, sample quotations have been provided to illustrate the themes, using the responder's voice. In total the results shared below represent 4 focus groups and 11 interviews, including:

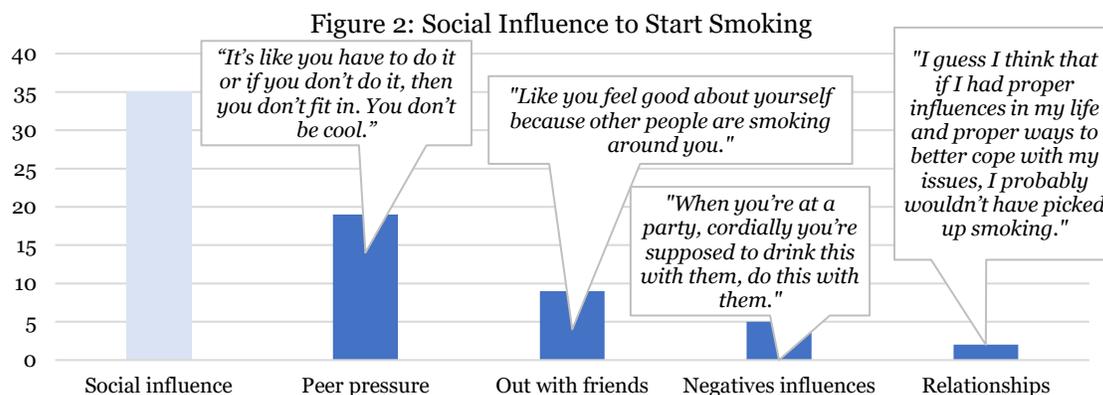
- 4 focus groups, with ages ranging from 18-74, with mostly non-smokers
- 4 youth interviews, non-smokers
- 5 adult interviews, smokers
- 2 elder interviews

1. What influences people to start smoking?

Participants shared a variety of reasons why individuals may start smoking. The strong top two results were social influence as well as relaxing or escaping from stress. Social influence included comments such as *“bad influences and peer pressure”* and *“I describe it as like a social thing”* while relaxing included comments such as *“like when you’re stressed out you feel like tobacco helps you relax your mind”* or *“I do smoke when I get really fidgety at work.”* Several others mentioned the influence alcohol has on tobacco use, sharing they smoke only when they drink. Other themes that arose, though less often, were the influence of culture, family, and access. The presence of tobacco at cultural events or seeing family members smoke was shared by some as reasons they may start smoking. However, it is clear in reviewing Figure 1, the primary influence is social.



To further understand the social influence discussion, Figure 2 presents the subthemes for social influence. In reviewing Figure 2, peer pressure was stated explicitly by some, while others mentioned being out with friends or the negative influence of the wrong crowd.

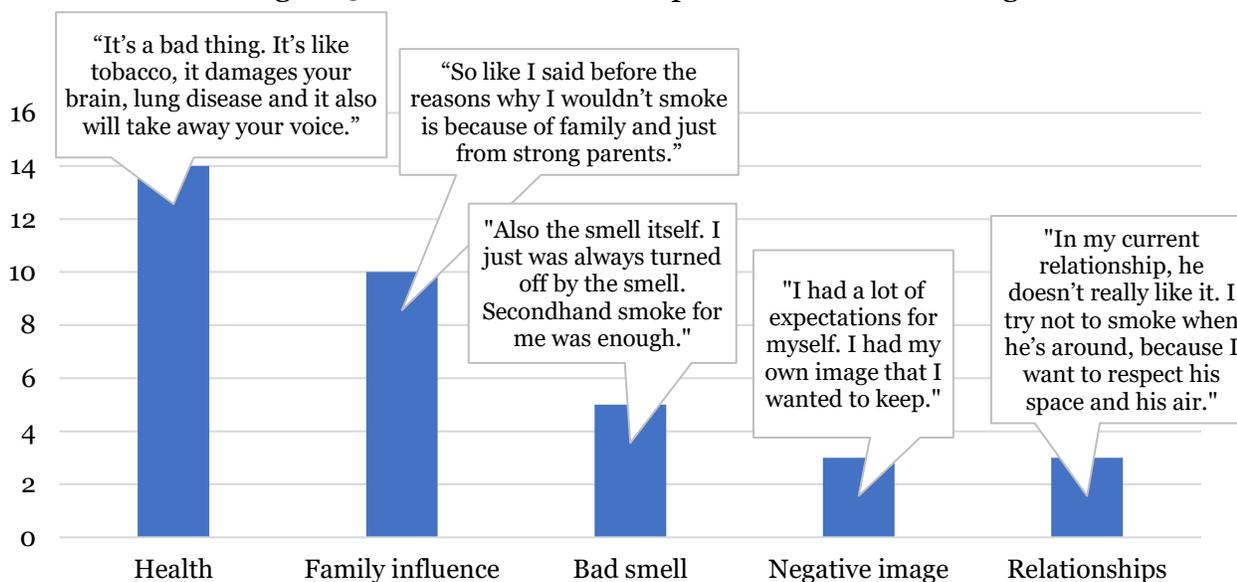


2. What influences people to not start smoking?

In the focus groups and interviews, participants were asked a series of questions about why they or others don't smoke. Responses centered on health effects and family influences. Participants were quick to cite how smoking tobacco impacts your physical health. Others shared how their families did not approve of smoking or provided support to live a healthy life, dealing with stress without tobacco.

Responses on health varied according to which aspects of health individuals were concerned about. A few participants cited it was difficult to be active or play sports knowing the impacts smoking can have on your lungs. Other shared they were getting sick too often when smoking and felt that stopping smoking could help improve their overall health. One individual shared, *"I do not see what is happening inside my body until I went to the doctor, and the doctor showed me what was happening to my blood and my liver...I felt in a way a failure in a little bit."*

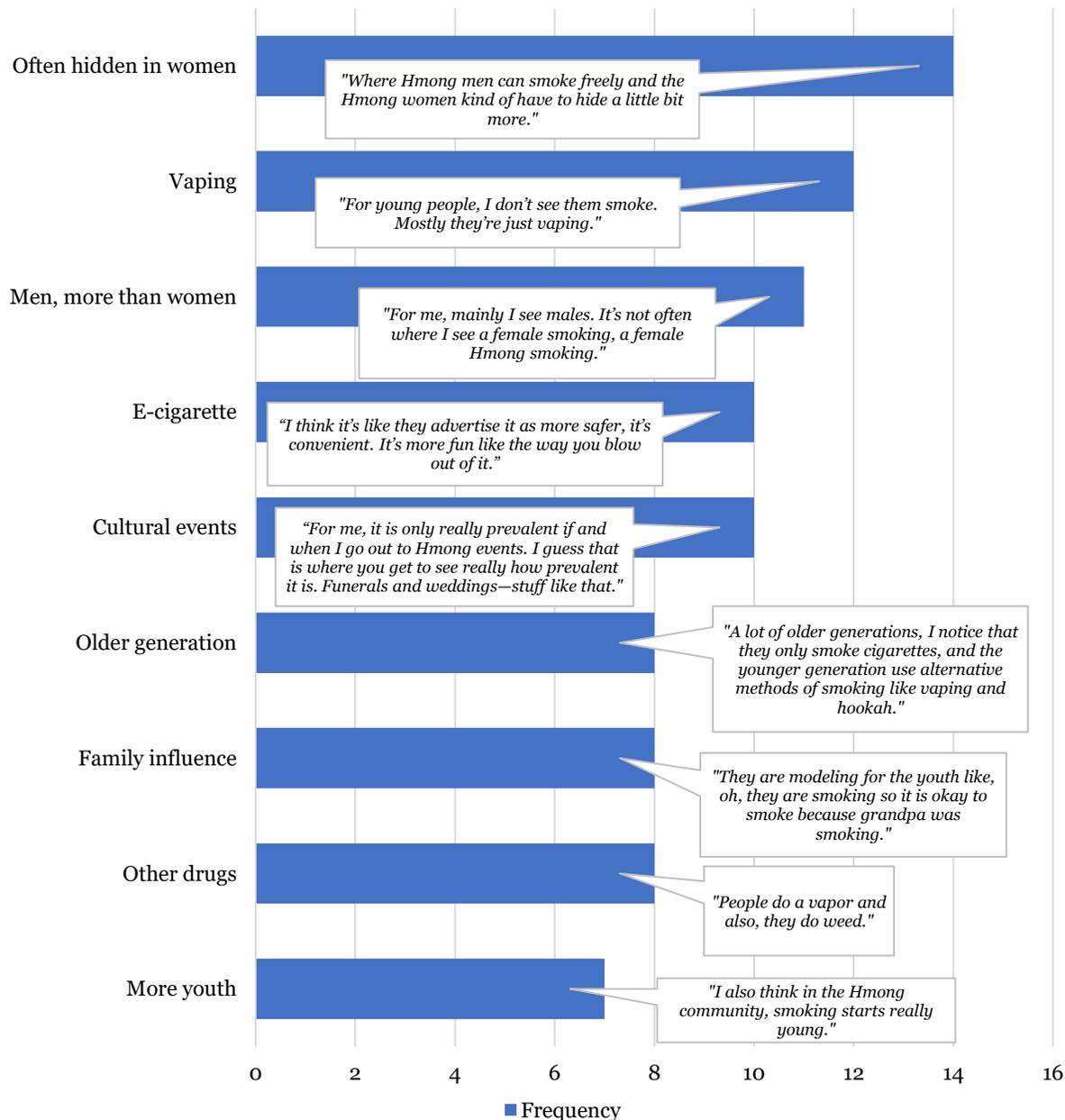
Figure 3: What Influences People to Not Start Smoking?



3. What/How is tobacco seen in the Hmong community?

One of the major questions this project hoped to answer was how tobacco is seen in the Hmong Community in St. Paul and which products are being used and which quit resources are being tried. Responses varied significantly. Figure 4 highlights the broadness of answers, with many themes generating significant support. The top theme was a discussion around how women often have to hide their smoking, as it seems to be viewed negatively if a woman is smoking, while this is not the case for men. As a consequence, many shared it is seen publicly in men much more often than women. A secondary discussion that many engaged in is the presence of vaping and e-cigarettes. Some noted this difference explicitly, while others discussed each as if they were the same as cigarettes. Others shared vaping as a different activity than smoking all together.

Figure 4: What/How Is Tobacco Seen in Hmong Community

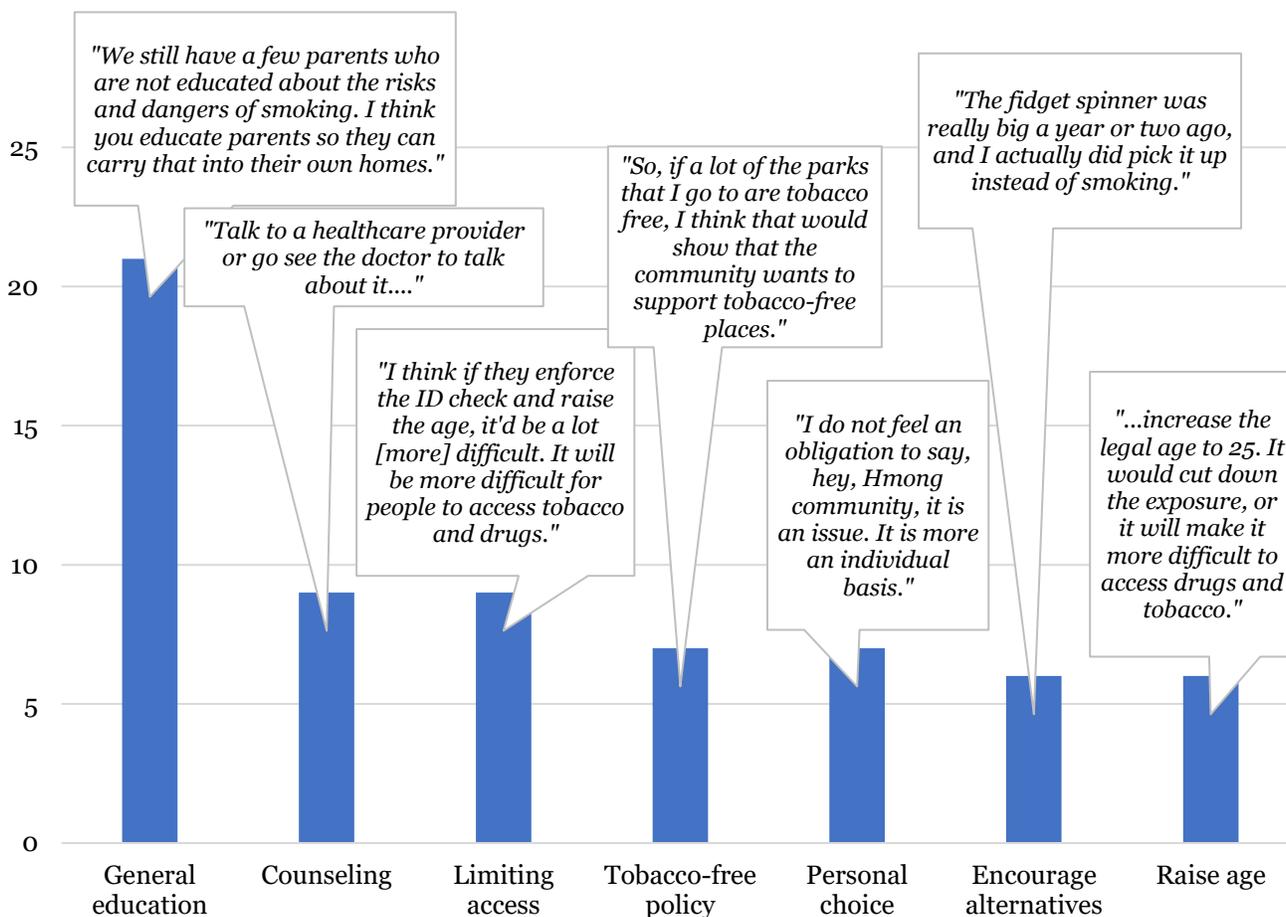


4. What can be done?

The most common response from participants when asked what can be done to reduce tobacco use in the Hmong community was general education. Participants also discussed increasing access to counseling options, limiting access, and enforcing current tobacco policies such as age restrictions. Some participants desired the age restrictions to be raised to limit access and to discourage the younger generation from experimenting with tobacco.

Comments on general education included broad comments such as “just more education” to specific suggestions, such as talking with parents about trends in youth, highlighting the health impacts, and sharing alternative ways to handle stress.

Figure 5: What Can Be Done?



In addition to the results shared above, there were a few additional interviews that were not recorded and therefore not analyzed in the same way. Instead, detailed notes were taken during the interviews and key discussions are shared below. Elders, those who currently smoke, and an additional youth group are summarized below.

Elders

Several interviews were conducted with Elders. When asked about what influences individuals to smoke, they shared they believe peer influence, non-Hmong community influence, and historical influences such as time in the military influenced individuals. The Elders views are similar to the data above, with the notable difference of the historic and non-Hmong influence. When asked about reasons individuals choose not to smoke, very similar items were noted, including health, negative image in women, and the poor smell. Elders shared they see mostly young boys smoking in the Hmong community as well as veterans. When asked about traditional use in the Hmong community, they shared tobacco may be used as a gift in ceremonies but downplayed the potential influence this may have on encouraging smoking, as often, they are thrown out or given to those who currently smoke. Finally, elders shared they believed education for families and youth could help with tobacco prevention.

Current Smokers

When those who currently smoke were interviewed, they shared similar responses to others, as reported above. Responding to what influences individuals to smoke, they cited trying to be cool and fit in as well as appreciating the chemical influence to stay awake or focused. They shared they see tobacco use as fairly common in the Hmong community, especially in social situations. They did note it is an issue, sharing how individuals start smoking as a social habit and then get addicted. They didn't notice a strong difference in genders but did say most who smoke are likely younger. Suggestions to address smoking included increasing the legal age and limiting access. Others suggested increasing awareness through hosting events or encouraging conversation around tobacco use.

Youth

Three youth were interviewed and shared their perspectives on tobacco use in the Hmong community. They saw the influence of friends and role models (positive and negative) influencing each individual's decision to use or not use tobacco. They also cited social media and stress as contributing factors. In the Hmong community, they saw tobacco use most often in 14- to 20-year olds and much less in older generations. When asked about types of tobacco used, they shared they see vaping often but not e-cigarettes. They discussed seeing it at school and in public, often in hidden corners or bathrooms. They also shared they didn't think many knew that vaping was bad for you and that it is easy to access and use. More education around vaping was the primary suggestion to help reduce tobacco use.